

Utah rates high for maintaining Pony Express trail

■ *Second in a series*

By Bruce Hills

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Utah has done an excellent job of maintaining its portion of the 124-year-old Pony Express trail.

Steve Banks and I, traveling west by pickup truck and trailing a dune buggy behind, found our home state has done better than Nevada or California in identifying Pony Express stations and the route from one to the next.

In Salt Lake City, the Pony Express riders stopped at Salt Lake House, at 143 S. Main, a station built of stone, which looked much like Brigham Young's Beehive House. Horace Greeley and Mark Twain were among the guests there.

From there the trail wove south nine miles to Trader's Rest, on State Street, and then to Rockwell's, 10 miles farther south. The station was

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named after the operator, Orrin Porter Rockwell, who served in the 1830s as Brigham Young's bodyguard and was later appointed territorial marshal.

None of these sites exists today,



say, and has a museum there, The Stagecoach Museum, which is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is 50 cents. The inn was built in 1858 by John Carson as a family home and inn and was used as a Pony Express and Overland Stage stop during the 1860s.

Simpson Springs, 43 miles west of Fairfield, has been restored and is said to look much as it did when it was a Pony Express station. Several other stations were in Utah, and only ruins remain. Plaques and signs at these locations tell their stories.

From Camp Floyd in Fairfield, west to the Nevada border, the trail moved through 15 station stops. Today the road is marked with signs, and the gravel road has a fairly good surface. One can drive 40 mph or more on most stretches.

Large stone monuments have been constructed at most of the stations, and information plaques and signs help to identify some of the stops. However, vandals have damaged many, if not most, of Utah's Pony Express monuments, and many signs along the route have disappeared.

Aside from that, the Pony Express Trail in Utah continuously offers

great help on the Pony Express trail through Utah.

Between Fairfield and the Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge, which is on the trail about 90 miles west of Fairfield, Steve and I saw only one car on the road.

The wildlife refuge is a surprise. Imagine seeing the Bonneville Salt Flats in the northwest stretching into the distance and sage brush and sand on both sides of the Pony Express route, and then suddenly seeing water flowing in streams along the trail.

The water comes from natural springs and flows into lakes at the wildlife refuge, which is host for a variety of water birds and muskrats, skunks and coyotes.

Twenty-five miles west lies Callao, a tiny village of log and frame homes. There are no stores or services in Callao. BLM employee Decker says there used to be a farmer there who had a gasoline pump in his yard and would sell gas to tourists, "but he tore the pump down when gas prices jumped so high a few years ago."

Raymond Timm, 25, who lives in Callao in a log home built decades ago, says his ancestors used to sell wood, hay and grain to the Pony Express station at Willow Springs a half mile west of Callao, and to Boyd Station, eight miles east of Callao.

"I had an ancestor named George Boyd who worked at the express station," Timm said.

Today, Timm and his brother Dennis grow 150 acres of hay and raise 100 cattle on their farm.

Life is peaceful and quiet in Callao, Timm says. "We have only had



PHOTOGRAPHY/ BRUCE HILLS

Raymond Timm's ancestors worked at the Pony Express station near Callao

April redevelopment deal helped city, hurt 2 firms

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Months later, the mall proposal failed, and the RDA was left property-rich with no viable project, having acquired options on property valued at about \$1.3 million.

In February 1983, Randy Sant was hired as RDA director, after Bettilyon resigned. Sant was faced with an agency in debt with property obligations, but with no certain projects.

"One of my first goals was to liquidate some of that property," Sant said. "It was screwing up the accounting, and the county was getting angry that we were holding so much land."

Shipley came into the picture in February of this year, as company officials looked at potential sites in Centerville and Woods Cross for their headquarters.

Their contractor, Larry Eckman of Bountiful, contacted Sant about property the RDA might have to offer.

"I gave them three choices, and they picked the Fourth North-Main Street site," Sant said.

The trouble was, Shipley officials had been looking at undeveloped land with selling prices about half of the \$438,700 price tag on the Smedley property, and said they could not afford more expensive land.

So the RDA board of directors (the City Council) proposed a "write-down" of the property, setting the price at an amount Shipley was willing to pay: just under \$258,000.

"We were agreed from the beginning," Sant said, "that the write-down of the property would be no less than the value of the railroad rail bed."

be sold out from under him.

"After the mall idea was defunct," Sloan said, "we felt safe. Stan (Smedley) even told me once we could possibly be there for the next nine years."

The RDA was of little help, even though they sent a letter offering assistance, Sloan said. He added he doesn't remember any offers of loans or grants from the RDA. "I would have jumped at something like that," he said.

Smedley said he may have told Sloan the city had no plans for the property, because that was true until February, when Shipley became interested.

"But I never said anything about nine years. From the time (Sloan) came in, we told him the land was under contract and his lease could be terminated at any time."

Sloan said his Layton location is operating better than expected, but said he still has serious financial problems.

His savings of \$1,800 was used to move from Bountiful; his wife recently gave birth to twins just after his medical insurance company canceled his policy, and Smedley has sued him for two months of back rent.

Sloan said he feels no one was completely honest with him.

"Somebody should have taken responsibility," he said. "If I lose in court, that will probably force me out of business . . . and we were just starting to make money there in Bountiful."

The demise of 4th Street Games was slightly different, the result of a city ordinance prohibiting more than four

day much as it did in 1860, historians

Camp Floyd in Fairfield looks to-

can the traveler observe a station —

nearby Army camp.

Not until the next stop, Fairfield, Express Stations of Utah in Historical Perspective," published in 1979, from Lowell Decker of the Bureau of Land Management office in Salt Lake City before our trip. It was of

no telephones.

People who live in Callao say they buy their gasoline and groceries in Delta, 90 miles to the southeast, or in Wendover, 80 miles northwest. There are two stores in Ibapah, a town about 30 miles farther west near the Goshute Indian Reservation on the Utah-Nevada border, and gasoline is

available there, but Callao residents say they seldom go to Ibapah. There is only one phone in Ibapah, at the Goshute General Store, owned and operated by Jim and Kay Hill. Mrs. Hill said she has operated the store five years. Before that, her fa-

ther, Pappy Payne, ran the store. He is from Gold Hill, six miles away — a ghost town now with less than half a dozen residents. From Ibapah the Pony Express route winds through the Goshute Indian Reservation to the Nevada bor-

der, about live miles west of the store. For the next 150 miles through eastern Nevada, the Pony Express trail is just that — a trail — and in some places hardly a trail at all. Next: The trail through Nevada.

